

H.297

Introduced by Representatives Botzow of Pownal, Carr of Brandon, Cross of
Winooski, Kitzmiller of Montpelier, Kupersmith of South
Burlington, and Marcotte of Coventry

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Utilities; Department of Public Service; planning; Universal Service
Fund; federal proceedings

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to make various
amendments to matters within the jurisdiction of the Department of Public
Service, including enhanced coordination of planning; broader application of
the Universal Service Fund surcharge; and participation in federal proceedings.

~~An act relating to duties and functions of the Department of Public Service~~
Vermont telecommunications policy

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

~~*** Participation in Federal Proceedings ***~~

Sec. 1. 30 V.S.A. § 2(b) is amended to read:

(b) In cases requiring hearings by the ~~board~~ Board, the ~~department~~
Department, through the ~~director for public advocacy~~ Director for Public
Advocacy, shall represent the interests of the people of the ~~state~~ State, unless

1 ~~otherwise specified by law. In any hearing, the board~~ Board may, if it
2 determines that the public interest would be served, request the ~~attorney~~
3 ~~general~~ Attorney General or a member of the Vermont ~~bar~~ Bar to represent the
4 public or the ~~state~~ State. In addition, the Department may intervene, appear,
5 and participate in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission proceedings,
6 Federal Communications Commission proceedings, or other federal
7 proceedings on behalf of the Vermont public.

8 * * * Coordination of Energy Planning * * *

9 Sec. 2. 30 V.S.A. § 202 is amended to read:

10 § 202. ELECTRICAL ENERGY PLANNING

11 (a) The ~~department of public service~~ Department of Public Service, through
12 the ~~director for regulated utility planning~~ Director for Regulated Utility
13 Planning, shall constitute the responsible utility planning agency of the ~~state~~
14 State for the purpose of obtaining for all consumers in the ~~state~~ State proper
15 utility service at minimum cost under efficient and economical management
16 consistent with other public policy of the ~~state~~ State. The ~~director~~ Director
17 shall be responsible for the provision of plans for meeting emerging trends
18 related to electrical energy demand, supply, safety, and conservation.

19 (b) The ~~department~~ Department, through the ~~director~~ Director, shall prepare
20 an electrical energy plan for the ~~state~~ State. The plan shall be for a 20-year
21 period and shall serve as a basis for state electrical energy policy. The electric

1 ~~energy plan shall be based on the principles of "least cost integrated planning"~~

2 set out in and developed under section 218c of this title. The plan shall include
3 at a minimum:

4 (1) an overview, looking 20 years ahead, of statewide growth and
5 development as they relate to future requirements for electrical energy,
6 including patterns of urban expansion, statewide and service area economic
7 growth, shifts in transportation modes, modifications in housing types and
8 design, conservation and other trends and factors which, as determined by the
9 ~~director~~ Director, will significantly affect state electrical energy policy and
10 programs;

11 (2) an assessment of all energy resources available to the ~~state~~ State for
12 electrical generation or to supply electrical power, including, among others,
13 fossil fuels, nuclear, hydro-electric, biomass, wind, fuel cells, and solar energy
14 and strategies for minimizing the economic and environmental costs of energy
15 supply, including the production of pollutants, by means of efficiency and
16 emission improvements, fuel shifting, and other appropriate means;

17 (3) estimates of the projected level of electrical energy demand;

18 (4) a detailed exposition, including capital requirements and the
19 estimated cost to consumers, of how such demand shall be met based on the
20 assumptions made in subdivision (1) of this subsection and the policies set out
21 in subsection (c) of this section; and

1 ~~(5) specific strategies for reducing electric rates to the greatest extent~~
2 possible in Vermont over the most immediate ~~five-year~~ six-year period, for the
3 next succeeding ~~five-year~~ six-year period, and long-term sustainable strategies
4 for achieving and maintaining the lowest possible electric rates over the full
5 20-year planning horizon consistent with the goal of maintaining a financially
6 stable electric utility industry in Vermont.

7 (c) In developing the plan, the ~~department~~ Department shall take into
8 account the protection of public health and safety; preservation of
9 environmental quality; the potential for reduction of rates paid by all retail
10 electricity customers; the potential for reduction of electrical demand through
11 conservation, including alternative utility rate structures; use of load
12 management technologies; efficiency of electrical usage; utilization of waste
13 heat from generation; and utility assistance to consumers in energy
14 conservation.

15 (d) In establishing plans, the ~~director~~ Director shall:

16 (1) Consult with:

17 (A) the public;

18 (B) Vermont municipal utilities;

19 (C) Vermont cooperative utilities;

20 (D) Vermont investor-owned utilities;

21 (E) Vermont electric transmission companies;

- 1 ~~(F) environmental and residential consumer advocacy groups active~~
2 in electricity issues;
3 (G) industrial customer representatives;
4 (H) commercial customer representatives;
5 (I) ~~the public service board~~ Public Service Board;
6 (J) an entity designated to meet the public's need for energy
7 efficiency services under subdivision 218c(a)(2) of this title;
8 (K) other interested state agencies; and
9 (L) other energy providers.

10 (2) To the extent necessary, include in the plan surveys to determine
11 needed and desirable plant improvements and extensions and coordination
12 between utility systems, joint construction of facilities by two or more utilities,
13 methods of operations, and any change that will produce better service or
14 reduce costs. To this end, the ~~director~~ Director may require the submission of
15 data by each company subject to supervision, of its anticipated electrical
16 demand, including load fluctuation, supplies, costs, and its plan to meet that
17 demand and such other information as the ~~director~~ Director deems desirable.

18 (e) The ~~department~~ Department shall conduct public hearings on the final
19 draft and shall consider the evidence presented at such hearings in preparing
20 the final plan. The plan shall be adopted no later than January 1, ~~2004~~ 2016
21 and readopted in accordance with this section by every sixth January 1

1 ~~thereafter, and shall be submitted to the general assembly~~ General Assembly
2 each time the plan is adopted or readopted. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d)
3 (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the submission to be made
4 under this subsection.

5 (f) After adoption by the ~~department~~ Department of a final plan, any
6 company seeking ~~board~~ Board authority to make investments, to finance, to
7 site or construct a generation or transmission facility or to purchase electricity
8 or rights to future electricity, shall notify the ~~department~~ Department of the
9 proposed action and request a determination by the ~~department~~ Department
10 whether the proposed action is consistent with the plan. In its determination
11 whether to permit the proposed action, the ~~board~~ Board shall consider the
12 ~~department's~~ Department's determination of its consistency with the plan
13 along with all other factors required by law or relevant to the ~~board's~~ Board's
14 decision on the proposed action. If the proposed action is inconsistent with the
15 plan, the ~~board~~ Board may nevertheless authorize the proposed action if it finds
16 that there is good cause to do so. The ~~department~~ Department shall be a party
17 to any proceeding on the proposed action, except that this section shall not be
18 construed to require a hearing if not otherwise required by law.

19 (g) The ~~director~~ Director shall annually review that portion of a plan
20 extending over the next ~~five~~ six years. The ~~department~~ Department, through
21 the ~~director~~ Director, shall ~~annually~~ biennially extend the plan by ~~one~~ two

1 ~~additional year years; and from time to time, but in no and in any event less~~
2 ~~than every five years~~ sixth year, institute proceedings to review a plan and
3 make revisions, where necessary. The ~~five year~~ six-year review and any
4 interim revisions shall be made according to the procedures established in this
5 section for initial adoption of the plan. The six-year review and any revisions
6 made in connection with that review shall be performed contemporaneously
7 with readoption of the comprehensive energy plan under section 202b of this
8 title.

9 (h) The plans adopted under this section ~~shall be submitted to the energy~~
10 ~~committees of the general assembly and~~ shall become the electrical energy
11 portion of the state energy plan.

12 (i) It shall be a goal of the electrical energy plan to assure, by 2028, that at
13 least 60 MW of power are generated within the ~~state~~ State by combined heat
14 and power (CHP) facilities powered by renewable fuels ~~or by nonqualifying~~
15 ~~SPEED resources~~, as defined in section 8002 of this title. In order to meet this
16 goal, the plan shall include incentives for development and strategies to
17 identify locations in the ~~state~~ State that would be suitable for CHP. The plan
18 shall include strategies to assure the consideration of CHP potential during any
19 process related to the expansion of natural gas services in the ~~state~~ State.

1 ~~Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 202b is amended to read:~~

2 § 202b. STATE COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY PLAN

3 (a) ~~The department of public service~~ Department of Public Service, in
4 conjunction with other state agencies designated by the ~~governor~~ Governor,
5 shall prepare a comprehensive state energy plan covering at least a 20-year
6 period. The plan shall seek to implement the state energy policy set forth in
7 section 202a of this title. The plan shall include:

8 (1) A comprehensive analysis and projections regarding the use, cost,
9 supply, and environmental effects of all forms of energy resources used within
10 Vermont.

11 (2) Recommendations for ~~state~~ State implementation actions, regulation,
12 legislation, and other public and private action to carry out the comprehensive
13 energy plan.

14 (b) In developing or updating the plan's recommendations, the ~~department~~
15 ~~of public service~~ Department of Public Service shall seek public comment by
16 holding public hearings in at least five different geographic regions of the ~~state~~
17 State on at least three different dates, and by providing notice through
18 publication once a week and at least seven days apart for two or more
19 successive weeks in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the
20 regions where the hearings will be held, and by delivering notices to all
21 licensed commercial radio and television stations with transmitting facilities

1 ~~within the state State, plus Vermont Public Radio and Vermont Educational~~
2 ~~Television.~~

3 (c) ~~The department Department shall adopt a state energy plan by no later~~
4 ~~than January 1, 1994 2016 and shall readopt the plan by every sixth January 1~~
5 ~~thereafter. On adoption or readoption, the plan shall be submitted to the~~
6 ~~General Assembly. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required~~
7 ~~reports) shall not apply to such submission.~~

8 (1) Upon adoption of the plan, analytical portions of the plan may be
9 updated ~~annually~~ and published biennially.

10 (2) Every fourth year after the adoption or readoption of a plan under
11 this section, the Department shall publish the manner in which the Department
12 will engage the public in the process of readopting the plan under this section.

13 (3) The publication requirements of subdivisions (1) and (2) of this
14 subsection may be met by inclusion of the subject matter in the Department's
15 biennial report.

16 (4) The plan's implementation recommendations shall be updated by the
17 ~~department~~ Department no less frequently than every ~~five~~ six years. These
18 recommendations shall be updated prior to the expiration of ~~five~~ six years if
19 the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly passes a joint resolution making a
20 request to that effect. If the ~~department~~ Department proposes or the ~~general~~
21 ~~assembly~~ General Assembly requests the revision of implementation

1 ~~recommendations, the department Department shall hold public hearings on~~
2 the proposed revisions.

3 (d) ~~Any distribution~~ Distribution of the plan to members of the ~~general~~
4 ~~assembly~~ General Assembly shall be in accordance with the provisions of
5 2 V.S.A. § 20 ~~(a)-(c)~~.

6 Sec. 4. INTENT; RETROACTIVE APPLICATION

7 In enacting Secs. 2 (20-year electric plan) and 3 (comprehensive energy
8 plan) of this act, the General Assembly intends to set the readoption of these
9 plans by the Department of Public Service on a regular six-year cycle.

10 Sec. 5. REPEAL

11 21 V.S.A. § 269 (energy standards, compliance plan; training; enforcement;
12 compliance measurement) is repealed.

13 * * * USF; Prepaid Wireless; Provider Assessment * * *

14 Sec. 6. 30 V.S.A. § 7521 is amended to read:

15 § 7521. CHARGE IMPOSED; WHOLESale EXEMPTION

16 (a) A universal service charge is imposed on all retail telecommunications
17 service provided to a Vermont address. Where the location of a service and the
18 location receiving the bill differ, the location of the service shall be used to
19 determine whether the charge applies. The charge is imposed on the person
20 purchasing the service, but shall be collected by the telecommunications
21 provider. Each telecommunications service provider shall include in its tariffs

1 ~~filed at the public service board Public Service Board a description of its~~

2 billing procedures for the universal service fund charge.

3 (b) The universal service charge shall not apply to wholesale transactions
4 between telecommunications service providers where the service is a
5 component part of a service provided to an end user. This exemption includes;
6 ~~but is not limited to,~~ network access charges and interconnection charges paid
7 to a local exchange carrier.

8 (c) In the case of mobile telecommunications service, the universal service
9 charge is imposed when the customer's place of primary use is in Vermont.
10 The terms "customer," "place of primary use," and "mobile
11 telecommunications service" have the meanings given in 4 U.S.C. § 124. All
12 provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 9782 shall apply to the imposition of the universal
13 service charge under this section.

14 (d)(1) In the case of prepaid wireless telecommunications services, the
15 universal service charge shall be imposed pursuant to either subdivision (A)
16 or (B) of this subdivision, at the discretion of the service provider:

17 (A) the universal service charge shall be imposed when funds are
18 applied to an account associated with a Vermont telephone number or a
19 Vermont address; or

20 (B) the universal service charge shall be imposed on the provider
21 based on its gross operating revenue.

~~(2) For purposes of this subsection:~~

~~(A) "Gross operating revenue" means the gross operating revenue received by the provider in the conduct of its business in Vermont, as reported to the Department of Public Service under section 22 of this title.~~

~~(B) "Prepaid wireless telecommunications service" means a telecommunications service as defined in section 203(5) of this title that a consumer pays for in advance and that is sold in predetermined units or dollars which decline with use.~~

~~(e) If a provider of prepaid wireless telecommunications service submits an attestation under oath with its annual report filed under section 22 of this title and the attestation states the percentage of its services sold nationwide by third-party resellers as opposed to services sold by the provider directly to customers, the amount of the charge imposed under subsection (d) of this section may be reduced by up to 25 percent in consideration of the approximate percentage of services sold by third-party resellers in Vermont.~~

* * * Effective Date * * *

Sec. 7. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

* * * Participation in Federal Proceedings * * *

~~Sec. 1. 30 V.S.A. § 2(b) is amended to read.~~

~~(b) In cases requiring hearings by the board Board, the department Department, through the ~~director for public advocacy~~ Director for Public Advocacy, shall represent the interests of the people of the ~~state~~ State, unless otherwise specified by law. In any hearing, the ~~board~~ Board may, if it determines that the public interest would be served, request the ~~attorney general~~ Attorney General or a member of the Vermont ~~bar~~ Bar to represent the public or the ~~state~~ State. In addition, the Department may intervene, appear, and participate in Federal Energy Regulatory Commission proceedings, Federal Communications Commission proceedings, or other federal administrative proceedings on behalf of the Vermont public.~~

* * * Coordination of Energy Planning * * *

Sec. 2. 30 V.S.A. § 202 is amended to read:

§ 202. ELECTRICAL ENERGY PLANNING

~~(a) The department of public service~~ Department of Public Service, through the ~~director for regulated utility planning~~ Director for Regulated Utility Planning, shall constitute the responsible utility planning agency of the ~~state~~ State for the purpose of obtaining for all consumers in the ~~state~~ State proper utility service at minimum cost under efficient and economical management consistent with other public policy of the ~~state~~ State. ~~The director~~ Director shall be responsible for the provision of plans for meeting emerging trends related to electrical energy demand, supply, safety, and conservation.

~~(b) The department Department, through the director Director, shall prepare an electrical energy plan for the ~~state~~ State. The plan shall be for a 20-year period and shall serve as a basis for state electrical energy policy. The electric energy plan shall be based on the principles of "least cost integrated planning" set out in and developed under section 218c of this title. The plan shall include at a minimum:~~

~~(1) an overview, looking 20 years ahead, of statewide growth and development as they relate to future requirements for electrical energy, including patterns of urban expansion, statewide and service area economic growth, shifts in transportation modes, modifications in housing types and design, conservation and other trends and factors which, as determined by the ~~director~~ Director, will significantly affect state electrical energy policy and programs;~~

~~(2) an assessment of all energy resources available to the ~~state~~ State for electrical generation or to supply electrical power, including, among others, fossil fuels, nuclear, hydro-electric, biomass, wind, fuel cells, and solar energy and strategies for minimizing the economic and environmental costs of energy supply, including the production of pollutants, by means of efficiency and emission improvements, fuel shifting, and other appropriate means;~~

~~(3) estimates of the projected level of electrical energy demand;~~

~~(4) a detailed exposition, including capital requirements and the estimated cost to consumers, of how such demand shall be met based on the assumptions made in subdivision (1) of this subsection and the policies set out in subsection (c) of this section; and~~

~~(5) specific strategies for reducing electric rates to the greatest extent possible in Vermont over the most immediate ~~five-year~~ six-year period, for the next succeeding ~~five-year~~ six-year period, and long-term sustainable strategies for achieving and maintaining the lowest possible electric rates over the full 20-year planning horizon consistent with the goal of maintaining a financially stable electric utility industry in Vermont.~~

~~(c) In developing the plan, the ~~department~~ Department shall take into account the protection of public health and safety; preservation of environmental quality; the potential for reduction of rates paid by all retail electricity customers; the potential for reduction of electrical demand through conservation, including alternative utility rate structures; use of load management technologies; efficiency of electrical usage; utilization of waste heat from generation; and utility assistance to consumers in energy conservation.~~

~~(d) In establishing plans, the ~~director~~ Director shall:~~

~~(1) Consult with:~~

~~(A) the public;~~

~~(B) Vermont municipal utilities;~~

~~(C) Vermont cooperative utilities;~~

~~(D) Vermont investor-owned utilities;~~

~~(E) Vermont electric transmission companies;~~

~~(F) environmental and residential consumer advocacy groups active in electricity issues;~~

~~(G) industrial customer representatives;~~

~~(H) commercial customer representatives;~~

~~(I) the ~~public service board~~ Public Service Board;~~

~~(J) an entity designated to meet the public's need for energy efficiency services under subdivision 218c(a)(2) of this title;~~

~~(K) other interested state agencies; and~~

~~(L) other energy providers.~~

~~(2) To the extent necessary, include in the plan surveys to determine needed and desirable plant improvements and extensions and coordination between utility systems, joint construction of facilities by two or more utilities, methods of operations, and any change that will produce better service or reduce costs. To this end, the ~~director~~ Director may require the submission of data by each company subject to supervision, of its anticipated electrical demand, including load fluctuation, supplies, costs, and its plan to meet that demand and such other information as the ~~director~~ Director deems desirable.~~

~~(e) The department Department shall conduct public hearings on the final draft and shall consider the evidence presented at such hearings in preparing the final plan. The plan shall be adopted no later than January 1, ~~2004~~ 2016 and readopted in accordance with this section by every sixth January 1 thereafter, and shall be submitted to the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly each time the plan is adopted or readopted. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required reports) shall not apply to the submission to be made under this subsection.~~

~~(f) After adoption by the department Department of a final plan, any company seeking ~~board~~ Board authority to make investments, to finance, to site or construct a generation or transmission facility or to purchase electricity or rights to future electricity, shall notify the ~~department~~ Department of the proposed action and request a determination by the ~~department~~ Department whether the proposed action is consistent with the plan. In its determination whether to permit the proposed action, the ~~board~~ Board shall consider the ~~department's~~ Department's determination of its consistency with the plan along with all other factors required by law or relevant to the ~~board's~~ Board's decision on the proposed action. If the proposed action is inconsistent with the plan, the ~~board~~ Board may nevertheless authorize the proposed action if it finds that there is good cause to do so. The ~~department~~ Department shall be a~~

~~party to any proceeding on the proposed action, except that this section shall not be construed to require a hearing if not otherwise required by law.~~

~~(g) The ~~director~~ Director shall annually review that portion of a plan extending over the next ~~five~~ six years. The ~~department~~ Department, through the ~~director~~ Director, shall ~~annually~~ biennially extend the plan by ~~one~~ two additional ~~year~~ years; and from time to time, ~~but in no~~ and in any event less than every five years sixth year, institute proceedings to review a plan and make revisions, where necessary. The ~~five-year~~ six-year review and any interim revisions shall be made according to the procedures established in this section for initial adoption of the plan. The six-year review and any revisions made in connection with that review shall be performed contemporaneously with readoption of the comprehensive energy plan under section 202b of this title.~~

~~(h) The plans adopted under this section shall be submitted to the energy committees of the general assembly and shall become the electrical energy portion of the state energy plan.~~

~~(i) It shall be a goal of the electrical energy plan to assure, by 2028, that at least 60 MW of power are generated within the ~~state~~ State by combined heat and power (CHP) facilities powered by renewable fuels ~~or by nonqualifying SPEED resources~~, as defined in section 8002 of this title. In order to meet this goal, the plan shall include incentives for development and strategies to~~

~~identify locations in the state State that would be suitable for CHP. The plan shall include strategies to assure the consideration of CHP potential during any process related to the expansion of natural gas services in the ~~state~~ State.~~

Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 202b is amended to read:

§ 202b. STATE COMPREHENSIVE ENERGY PLAN

(a) The ~~department of public service~~ Department of Public Service, in conjunction with other state agencies designated by the ~~governor~~ Governor, shall prepare a comprehensive state energy plan covering at least a 20-year period. The plan shall seek to implement the state energy policy set forth in section 202a of this title. The plan shall include:

(1) A comprehensive analysis and projections regarding the use, cost, supply, and environmental effects of all forms of energy resources used within Vermont.

(2) Recommendations for ~~state~~ State implementation actions, regulation, legislation, and other public and private action to carry out the comprehensive energy plan.

(b) In developing or updating the plan's recommendations, the ~~department of public service~~ Department of Public Service shall seek public comment by holding public hearings in at least five different geographic regions of the ~~state~~ State on at least three different dates, and by providing notice through publication once a week and at least seven days apart for two or more

~~successive weeks in a newspaper or newspapers of general circulation in the~~
regions where the hearings will be held, and by delivering notices to all
licensed commercial radio and television stations with transmitting facilities
within the ~~state~~ State, plus Vermont Public Radio and Vermont Educational
Television.

(c) The ~~department~~ Department shall adopt a state energy plan by ~~no later~~
~~than~~ January 1, 1994 2016 and shall readopt the plan by every sixth January 1
thereafter. On adoption or readoption, the plan shall be submitted to the
General Assembly. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of required
reports) shall not apply to such submission.

(1) Upon adoption of the plan, analytical portions of the plan may be
updated annually and published biennially.

(2) Every fourth year after the adoption or readoption of a plan under
this section, the Department shall publish the manner in which the Department
will engage the public in the process of readopting the plan under this section.

(3) The publication requirements of subdivisions (1) and (2) of this
subsection may be met by inclusion of the subject matter in the Department's
biennial report.

(4) The plan's implementation recommendations shall be updated by the
department Department no less frequently than every five six years. These
recommendations shall be updated prior to the expiration of five six years if

~~the general assembly General Assembly passes a joint resolution making a request to that effect. If the ~~department~~ Department proposes or the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly requests the revision of implementation recommendations, the ~~department~~ Department shall hold public hearings on the proposed revisions.~~

~~(d) ~~Any distribution~~ Distribution of the plan to members of the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly shall be in accordance with the provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20 ~~(a)–(c)~~.~~

~~Sec. 4. INTENT; RETROACTIVE APPLICATION~~

~~In enacting Secs. 2 (20-year electric plan) and 3 (comprehensive energy plan) of this act, the General Assembly intends to set the readoption of these plans by the Department of Public Service on a regular six-year cycle.~~

~~*** USF; Prepaid Wireless; Provider Assessment ***~~

~~Sec. 5. 30 V.S.A. § 7521 is amended to read:~~

~~§ 7521. CHARGE IMPOSED; WHOLESALE EXEMPTION~~

~~(a) A universal service charge is imposed on all retail telecommunications service provided to a Vermont address. Where the location of a service and the location receiving the bill differ, the location of the service shall be used to determine whether the charge applies. The charge is imposed on the person purchasing the service, but shall be collected by the telecommunications provider. Each telecommunications service provider shall include in its tariffs~~

~~filed at the public service board Public Service Board a description of its~~

~~billing procedures for the universal service fund charge.~~

~~(b) The universal service charge shall not apply to wholesale transactions between telecommunications service providers where the service is a component part of a service provided to an end user. This exemption includes, but is not limited to, network access charges and interconnection charges paid to a local exchange carrier.~~

~~(c) In the case of mobile telecommunications service, the universal service charge is imposed when the customer's place of primary use is in Vermont. The terms "customer," "place of primary use," and "mobile telecommunications service" have the meanings given in 4 U.S.C. § 124. All provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 9782 shall apply to the imposition of the universal service charge under this section.~~

~~(d)(1) In the case of prepaid wireless telecommunications services, the universal service charge shall be imposed on the provider based on its gross operating revenue.~~

~~(2) For purposes of this subsection:~~

~~(A) "Gross operating revenue" means the gross operating revenue received by the provider from the sale of prepaid wireless telecommunications service in Vermont, as reported to the Department of Public Service under section 22 of this title.~~

~~(B) "Prepaid wireless telecommunications service" means a telecommunications service as defined in section 203(5) of this title that a consumer pays for in advance and that is sold in predetermined units or dollars which decline with use.~~

~~*** Effective Date ***~~

~~Sec. 6. EFFECTIVE DATE~~

~~This act shall take effect on passage.~~

~~*** Legislative Purpose; Findings ***~~

~~Sec. 1. LEGISLATIVE PURPOSE; FINDINGS~~

~~It is the intent of the General Assembly to maintain a robust and modern telecommunications network in Vermont by making strategic investments in improved technology for all Vermonters. To achieve that goal, it is the purpose of this act to upgrade the State's telecommunications objectives and reorganize government functions in a manner that results in more coordinated and efficient State programs and policies, and, ultimately, produces operational savings that may be invested in further deployment of broadband and mobile telecommunications services for the benefit of all Vermonters. In addition, it is the intent of the General Assembly to update and provide for a more equitable application of the Universal Service Fund (USF) surcharge. Together, these operational savings and additional USF monies will raise at least \$1 million annually, as follows:~~

(1) \$650,000.00 from an increase in the USF charge to a flat two percent;

(2) \$450,000.00 from application of the USF charge to prepaid wireless telecommunications service providers; and

(3) \$300,000.00 in operational savings from the transfer and consolidation of State telecommunications functions.

* * * *Universal Service Fund* * * *

Sec. 2. 30 V.S.A. § 7501 is amended to read:

§ 7501. *PURPOSE; DEFINITIONS*

(a) *It is the purpose of this act to create a financial structure that will allow every Vermont household to obtain basic telecommunications service at an affordable price, and to finance that structure with a proportional charge on all telecommunications transactions that interact with the public switched network.*

(b) *As used in this chapter:*

(1) *“Basic telecommunications service” means that a customer has available at his or her location:*

(A) *switched voice grade interactive telecommunications service permitting origination and termination of calls;*

(B) *the ability to transmit network switching instructions through tones generated by customer-owned equipment;*

(C) *the ability to transmit and receive the customer's computer-generated digital data, either by digital or analog transmission, reliably and at common transmission rates, using customer-owned equipment;*

(D) *the ability to communicate quickly and effectively with emergency response personnel; and*

(E) *telecommunications relay service, as authorized under section 218a of this title.*

(2) *“Interactive” means that a communications medium is regularly used to transmit information in two directions.*

(3) *“Line in service” means a circuit or channel connecting a customer to the public switched network or to the Internet.*

(4) *“Private network” means a telecommunications system entirely owned and operated by a single corporate or individual person other than a telecommunications service provider and not available to the general public.*

~~(4)~~(5) *“Public switched network” means the communications network owned and operated by telecommunications service providers, some of whom are common carriers.*

(6) “Service area” means:

(A) in the case of a rural telephone company, the company's study area as approved by the Federal Communications Commission; or

(B) in the case of a local exchange carrier, other than a rural telephone company, the carrier's local exchange service area as approved by the Public Service Board.

(7) "Service location" means a business or residential geographic point of contact of a telecommunications service for purposes of the enhanced-911 network. The number of service locations in each exchange shall be determined by the Department of Public Service in periodic updates to the State Telecommunications Plan based on analysis of the locations in the database of the Vermont Enhanced-911 Board.

~~(5)~~(8) "Telecommunications service" means the transmission of any interactive electromagnetic communications that passes through the public switched network. The term includes, ~~but is not limited to,~~ transmission of voice, image, data, and any other information, by means of ~~but not limited to~~ wire, electric conductor cable, optic fiber, microwave, radio wave, or any combinations of such media, and the leasing of any such service.

(A) Telecommunications service includes ~~but is not limited to:~~

(i) local telephone service, including any facility or service provided in connection with such local telephone service;

(ii) toll telephone service;

(iii) directory assistance;

(iv) two-way cable television service; and

(v) mobile telephone or telecommunication service, both analog and digital.

(B) Notwithstanding the ~~above, for purposes of~~ provisions of this subdivision (8), as used in this chapter, telecommunications service does not include:

(i) Services consisting primarily of the creation of artistic material or other information that is later transmitted over telecommunications equipment, including information services and electronic bulletin boards, but only to the extent that charges for such information processing are separated from charges for other telecommunications services, and only to the extent that such information is not used by any telecommunications service provider in the administration of the telecommunications network.

(ii) Mobile radio and paging services that do not have an electronic interface into the public switched network.

(iii) Private network services; provided, however, that payments by a private network to a telecommunications service provider, such as for point-to-point transmission services, are not exempt under this subdivision.

(iv) [Repealed.]

(v) Telecommunications services paid for at the point of purchase by depositing coins or currency.

(vi) *Charges incurred by utilizing prepaid telephone calling cards or prepaid authorization numbers.*

~~(6)(9)~~ *“Telecommunications service provider” means a company required by law to hold a certificate of public good from the ~~public service board~~ Public Service Board to offer telecommunications service for intrastate service, or is authorized by the Federal Communications Commission to offer interstate telecommunications service.*

Sec. 3. 30 V.S.A. § 7511(5) is amended to read:

(5) ~~To reduce the cost to customers of basic telecommunications service in high-cost areas, in the manner provided by section 7515 of this title to support the Connectivity Fund established in section 7516 of this chapter.~~

Sec. 4. 30 V.S.A. § 7516 is added to read:

§ 7516. CONNECTIVITY FUND

There is created a Connectivity Fund for the purpose of providing support to the High-Cost Program established under section 7515 of this chapter and the Connectivity Initiative established under section 7515b of this chapter. The fiscal agent shall determine annually, on or before September 1, the amount of monies available to the Connectivity Fund. Such funds shall be apportioned equally to the High-Cost Program and the Connectivity Initiative referenced in this section.

Sec. 5. 30 V.S.A. § 7515 is amended to read:

§ 7515. HIGH-COST PROGRAM

(a) ~~The General Assembly intends that the universal service charge shall be used in the future as a means of keeping basic telecommunications service affordable in all parts of this State, thereby maintaining universal service, and as a means of supporting access to broadband service in all parts of the State.~~

(b) ~~The Commissioner of Public Service, in conjunction with the Public Service Board, shall conduct a study of the costs and other factors affecting the delivery of local exchange service by the incumbent local exchange carriers (the providers of last resort). The study shall include an informal workshop process to be conducted by the Board. Such process shall be noticed to the general public and structured to allow written and verbal comments by the general public, service providers, public officials, and others as determined by the Board. The study shall:~~

(1) ~~After considering information on how various factors affect the costs of providing telecommunications service in Vermont and elsewhere, estimate the current costs and estimate, on a forward looking basis, the differential costs of providing local exchange service to various customer groups throughout Vermont.~~

~~(2) Estimate the relationship between basic telecommunications service charges and universal service, and the threshold level beyond which universal residential service is likely to be harmed.~~

~~(3) Estimate the relationship between basic telecommunications service charges and opportunities for uniform economic development throughout the State, and the threshold prices beyond which such opportunities may be adversely affected.~~

~~(4) Estimate the potential effects of local exchange competition on uniform and affordable basic telecommunications service charges in all parts of the State.~~

~~(5) Examine policy options by which the cost to customers may be managed so as not to jeopardize universal service and the uniform economic development opportunities, including at least the following:~~

~~(A) establishing a maximum price for basic telecommunications service, beyond which customers would have access, without regard to income, to credits or vouchers negotiable for local exchange service from a local exchange provider or competitive access provider;~~

~~(B) broadening eligibility for the Lifeline program; and~~

~~(C) establishing a mechanism to adjust the level of support for higher cost customers over time to reflect legal rights, recover historic costs, and reflect the advantages of improved technology and increased efficiency.~~

~~(6) Examine the actions, if any, of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in revising its Universal Service Fund, and the need, if any, for additional action in Vermont. In particular, the study shall examine the impact on Vermont services caused by the FCC's report and order released November 18, 2011, which, among other things, expands the federal Universal Service Fund to include broadband deployment in unserved areas. Further, the study shall consider the potential impact of various legal challenges to the FCC action on the federal Universal Service Fund.~~

~~(7) Propose mechanisms to support universal service and rural economic development while securing the benefits of telecommunications competition for Vermont households and businesses.~~

~~(8) Include an audit of the Universal Service Fund to examine, among other things, the contributions made to the fund in terms of the categories of telecommunications service providers covered as well as the specific services charged. In addition, the audit shall assess the disbursements made from the Fund.~~

~~(9) Consider any other relevant issues that may arise during the course of the study.~~

~~(c) The results of the study, together with any plan for amending and distributing funds under this section, shall be submitted to the House~~

~~Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and the Senate
Committee on Finance on or before December 1, 2012.~~

~~(d) The Commissioner of Public Service may contract with a consultant to
conduct the study required by this section. Costs incurred in conducting the
study shall be reimbursed from the State Universal Service Fund up to
\$75,000.00.~~

~~(e) To the extent this study may require disclosure of confidential
information by a telecommunications service provider, such confidential
information shall be disclosed to a third party pursuant to a protective
agreement. In no event shall the third party be a person or persons employed
by a business competitor or whose primary duties engage them in business
competition with a telecommunications service provider submitting the
confidential information. The third party may be the consultant retained by
the Commissioner under subsection (d) of this section or may be another third
party agreed upon by the Commissioner and the telecommunications service
providers. The third party shall be responsible for aggregating the
information and, once aggregated, may publicly disclose such information
consistent with the purposes of this section. The confidentiality requirements
of this subsection shall not affect whether information provided to an agency of
the State or a political subdivision of the State pursuant to other laws is or is
not subject to disclosure~~ The Public Service Board, after review of a petition of

a company holding a certificate of public good to provide telecommunications service in Vermont, and upon finding that the company meets all requirements for designation as an "eligible telecommunications carrier" as defined by the FCC, may designate the company as a Vermont-eligible telecommunications carrier (VETC).

(c) The supported services a designated VETC must provide are voice telephony services, as defined by the FCC, and broadband Internet access, directly or through an affiliate. A VETC receiving support under this section shall use that support for capital improvements in high cost areas to build broadband capable networks.

(d) The Board may designate multiple VETCs for a single high cost area, but each designated VETC shall:

(1) offer supported services to customers at all locations throughout the service area or areas for which it has been designated; and

(2) for its voice telephone services, meet service quality standards set by the Board.

(e) A VETC shall receive support as defined in subsection (i) of this section from the fiscal agent of the Vermont Universal Service Fund for each telecommunications line in service or service location, whichever is greater in number, in each high cost area it services. Such support may be made in the form of a net payment against the carrier's liability to the Fund. If multiple

VETCs are designated for a single area, then each VETC shall receive support for each line it has in service.

(f) As used in this section, a Vermont telephone exchange is a “high cost area” if the exchange is served by a rural telephone company, as defined by federal law, or if the exchange is designated as a rural exchange in the wholesale tariff of a regional bell operating company (RBOC), as defined by the FCC, or of a successor company to an RBOC. An exchange is not a high cost area if the Public Service Board finds that the supported services are available to all locations throughout the exchange from at least two service providers.

(g) Except as provided in subsection (h) of this section, a VETC shall provide broadband Internet access at speeds meeting 4 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload in each high cost area it serves within five years of designation. A VETC need not provide broadband service to a location that has service available from another service provider, as determined by the Department of Public Service.

(h) The Public Service Board may modify the build out requirements of subsection (d) of this section as it relates to broadband Internet access to be the geographic area that could be reached using one-half of the funds to be received over five years. A VETC may seek such waiver of the build out requirements in subsection (c) within one year of designation and shall

demonstrate the cost of meeting broadband Internet access requirements on an exchange basis and propose an alternative build out plan.

(i) The amount of the monthly support under this section shall be the pro rata share of available funds as provided in subsection (e) of this section.

(j) The Public Service Board shall adopt by rule standards and procedures for ensuring projects funded under this section are not competitive overbuilds of existing wired telecommunications services.

(k) Each VETC shall submit certification that it is meeting the requirements of this section and an accounting of how it expended the funds received under this section in the previous calendar year with its annual report to the Department of Public Service. For good cause shown, the Public Service Board may investigate submissions required by this subsection and may revoke a company's designation if it finds that the company is not meeting the requirements of this subsection.

Sec. 6. 30 V.S.A. § 7515b is added to read:

§ 7515b. CONNECTIVITY INITIATIVE

(a) The purpose of the Connectivity Initiative is to provide each service location in Vermont access to Internet service that is capable of speeds of at least 4 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload, beginning with locations not served as of December 31, 2013 according to the minimum technical service characteristic objectives applicable at that time. Within this category of

service locations, priority shall be given first to unserved and then to underserved locations. As used in this section, "unserved" means a location having access to only satellite or dial-up Internet service and "underserved" means a location having access to Internet service with speeds that exceed satellite and dial-up speeds but are less than 4 Mbps download and 1 Mbps upload. Any new services funded in whole or in part by monies in this Fund shall be capable of being continuously upgraded to reflect the best available, most economically feasible service capabilities.

(b) The Department of Public Service shall publish annually a list of census blocks eligible for funding based on the Department's most recent broadband mapping data. The Department annually shall solicit proposals from service providers, the Vermont Telecommunications Authority, and the Division for Connectivity to deploy broadband to eligible census blocks. The Department shall give priority to proposals that reflect the lowest cost of providing services to unserved and underserved locations; however, the Department also shall consider:

(1) the proposed data transfer rates and other data transmission characteristics of services that would be available to consumers;

(2) the price to consumers of services;

(3) the proposed cost to consumers of any new construction, equipment installation service, or facility required to obtain service;

(4) whether the proposal would use the best available technology that is economically feasible;

(5) the availability of service of comparable quality and speed; and

(6) the objectives of the State's Telecommunications Plan.

Sec. 7. 30 V.S.A. § 7523 is amended to read:

§ 7523. RATE ADJUSTED ANNUALLY OF CHARGE

~~(a) Annually, after considering the probable expenditures for programs funded pursuant to this chapter, the probable service revenues of the industry and seeking recommendations from the department, the public service board shall establish a rate of charge to apply during the 12 months beginning on the following September 1. However, the rate so established shall not at any time exceed two percent of retail telecommunications service. The board's decision shall be entered and announced each year before July 15. However, if the general assembly does not enact an authorization amount for E-911 before July 15, the board may defer decision until 30 days after the E-911 authorization is established, and the existing charge rate shall remain in effect until the board establishes a new rate~~ Beginning on July 1, 2014, the rate of charge shall be two percent of retail telecommunications service.

(b) Universal service charges imposed and collected by the fiscal agent under this subchapter shall not be transferred to any other fund or used to

support the cost of any activity other than in the manner authorized by section 7511 of this title.

** * * State Telecommunications Policy; Planning; Reporting * * **

Sec. 8. 30 V.S.A. § 202c is amended to read:

§ 202c. STATE TELECOMMUNICATIONS; POLICY AND PLANNING

(a) The General Assembly finds that advances in telecommunications technology and changes in federal regulatory policy are rapidly reshaping telecommunications services, thereby promising the people and businesses of the State communication and access to information, while creating new challenges for maintaining a robust, modern telecommunications network in Vermont.

(b) Therefore, to direct the benefits of improved telecommunications technology to all Vermonters, it is the purpose of this section and section 202d of this title to:

(1) ~~Strengthen~~ strengthen the State's role in telecommunications planning;

(2) ~~Support~~ support the universal availability of appropriate infrastructure and affordable services for transmitting voice and high-speed data;

(3) ~~Support~~ support the availability of modern mobile wireless telecommunications services along the State's travel corridors and in the State's communities-;

(4) ~~Provide~~ provide for high-quality, reliable telecommunications services for Vermont businesses and residents-;

(5) ~~Provide~~ provide the benefits of future advances in telecommunications technologies to Vermont residents and businesses-;

(6) ~~Support~~ support competitive choice for consumers among telecommunications service providers and promote open access among competitive service providers on nondiscriminatory terms to networks over which broadband and telecommunications services are delivered-;

(7) ~~Support, to the extent practical and cost effective,~~ support the application of telecommunications technology to maintain and improve governmental and public services, public safety, and the economic development of the State-;

(8) ~~Support~~ support deployment of broadband infrastructure that:

(A) ~~Uses~~ uses the best commercially available technology-;

(B) ~~Does~~ does not negatively affect the ability of Vermont to take advantage of future improvements in broadband technology or result in widespread installation of technology that becomes outmoded within a short period after installation-;

(9) ~~It is~~ in the deployment of broadband infrastructure, encourage the use of existing facilities, such as existing utility poles and corridors and other structures, in preference to the construction of new facilities or the replacement of existing structures with taller structures; and

(10) support measures designed to ensure that by the end of the year 2024 every E-911 business and residential location in Vermont has infrastructure capable of delivering Internet access with service that has a minimum download speed of 100 Mbps and is symmetrical.

Sec. 9. 30 V.S.A. § 202d is amended to read:

§ 202d. TELECOMMUNICATIONS PLAN

(a) ~~The department of public service~~ Department of Public Service shall constitute the responsible planning agency of the ~~state~~ State for the purpose of obtaining for all consumers in the ~~state~~ State stable and predictable rates and a technologically advanced telecommunications network serving all service areas in the ~~state~~ State. ~~The department of public service~~ Department shall be responsible for the provision of plans for meeting emerging trends related to telecommunications technology, markets, financing, and competition.

(b) ~~The department of public service~~ Department shall prepare a ~~telecommunications plan~~ Telecommunications Plan for the ~~state~~ State. ~~The department of innovation and information~~ Department of Innovation and Information, the Division for Connectivity and the agency of commerce and

~~community development~~ Agency of Commerce and Community Development
shall assist the ~~department of public service~~ Department of Public Service in
preparing the ~~plan~~ Plan. The ~~plan~~ Plan shall be for a ~~seven-year~~ ten-year
period and shall serve as a basis for ~~state~~ State telecommunications policy.
Prior to preparing the ~~plan~~ Plan, the ~~department of public service~~ Department
shall prepare:

(1) an overview, looking ~~seven~~ ten years ahead, of future requirements
for telecommunications services, considering services needed for economic
development, technological advances, and other trends and factors which, as
determined by the ~~department of public service~~ Department of Public Service,
will significantly affect ~~state~~ State telecommunications policy and programs;

(2) a survey of Vermont residents and businesses, conducted in
cooperation with the ~~agency of commerce and community development~~ Agency
of Commerce and Community Development and the Division for Connectivity,
to determine what telecommunications services are needed now and in the
succeeding ~~seven~~ ten years;

(3) an assessment of the current state of telecommunications
infrastructure;

(4) an assessment, conducted in cooperation with the ~~department of~~
~~innovation and information~~ Department of Innovation and Information and the
Division for Connectivity, of the current ~~state~~ State telecommunications system

and evaluation of alternative proposals for upgrading the system to provide the best available and affordable technology for use by government; and

(5) an assessment of the state of telecommunications networks and services in Vermont relative to other states, including price comparisons for key services and comparisons of the state of technology deployment.

(c) In developing the ~~plan~~ Plan, the ~~department~~ Department shall take into account the policies and goals of section 202c of this title.

(d) In establishing plans, public hearings shall be held and the ~~department of public service~~ Department shall consult with members of the public, representatives of telecommunications utilities, other providers, and other interested ~~state~~ State agencies, particularly the ~~agency of commerce and community development~~ Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Division for Connectivity, and the ~~department of innovation and information~~ Department of Innovation and Information, whose views shall be considered in preparation of the ~~plan~~ Plan. To the extent necessary, the ~~department of public service~~ Department shall include in the ~~plan~~ Plan surveys to determine existing, needed, and desirable plant improvements and extensions, access and coordination between telecommunications providers, methods of operations, and any change that will produce better service or reduce costs. To this end, the ~~department of public service~~ Department may

require the submission of data by each company subject to supervision by the ~~public service board~~ Public Service Board.

(e) Before adopting a ~~plan~~ Plan, the ~~department~~ Department shall conduct public hearings on a final draft and shall consider the testimony presented at such hearings in preparing the final ~~plan~~ Plan. At least one hearing shall be held jointly with ~~committees~~ Committees of the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly designated by the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly for this purpose. The ~~plan~~ Plan shall be adopted by ~~September 1, 2004~~ September 1, 2014.

(f) The ~~department~~ Department, from time to time, but in no event less than every three years, institute proceedings to review a ~~plan~~ Plan and make revisions, where necessary. The three-year major review shall be made according to the procedures established in this section for initial adoption of the ~~plan~~ Plan. For good cause or upon request by a ~~joint resolution~~ Joint Resolution passed by the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly, an interim review and revision of any section of the ~~plan~~ Plan may be made after conducting public hearings on the interim revision. At least one hearing shall be held jointly with ~~committees~~ Committees of the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly designated by the ~~general assembly~~ General Assembly for this purpose.

(g) The Department shall review and update the minimum technical service characteristic objectives not less than every three years beginning in 2017. In the event such review is conducted separately from an update of the Plan, the Department shall issue revised minimum technical service characteristic objectives as an amendment to the Plan.

Sec. 10. 3 V.S.A. § 2222b is amended to read:

§ 2222b. TELECOMMUNICATIONS; COORDINATION AND PLANNING

(a) The Secretary of Administration or designee shall be responsible for the coordination of telecommunications initiatives among Executive Branch agencies, departments, and offices.

(b) In furtherance of the goals set forth in 30 V.S.A. § 8060(b), the Secretary shall have the following duties:

(1) from information reasonably available after public notice to and written requests made of mobile telecommunications and broadband service providers, to develop and maintain an inventory of locations at which mobile telecommunications and broadband services are not available within the State, develop and maintain an inventory of infrastructure that is available or reasonably likely to be available to support provision of services to unserved areas, and develop and maintain an inventory of infrastructure necessary for provision of these services to the unserved areas;

(2) to identify the types and locations of infrastructure and services needed to accomplish the goals of this chapter;

(3) to formulate, on or before December 15, 2014, an action plan to accomplish the goals of universal availability of broadband and mobile telecommunications services ~~by the end of the year 2013~~;

(4) to coordinate the agencies of the State to make public resources available to support the extension of mobile telecommunications and broadband infrastructure and services to all unserved areas;

(5) to support and facilitate initiatives to extend the availability of mobile telecommunications and broadband services, and to promote development of the infrastructure that enables the provision of these services;

(6) through the Department of Innovation and Information, to aggregate and broker access at reduced prices to services and facilities required to provide wireless telecommunications and broadband services; and to waive or reduce State fees for access to state-owned rights-of-way in exchange for comparable value to the State, unless payment for use is otherwise required by federal law;

(7) to review all financial transactions, statements, and contracts of the Vermont ~~telecommunications authority~~ Telecommunications Authority established under 30 V.S.A. § 8061; and

(8) to receive all technical and administrative assistance as deemed necessary by the Secretary of Administration.

(c) Deployment tracking.

(1) Not later than 30 days after the effective date of this act, all persons proposing to construct or install Vermont cables, wires, or telecommunications facilities as defined in 30 V.S.A. § 248a(b)(1) shall file plans with the Secretary if the construction or installation relates to the deployment of broadband infrastructure and is funded in whole or in part pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Pub.L. No. 111-5, or by funds granted or loaned by the State of Vermont or one of its instrumentalities.

(2) The plans filed pursuant to subdivision (1) of this subsection shall include data identifying the projected coverage area, the projected average speed of service, service type, and the anticipated date of completion in addition to identifying the location and routes of proposed cables, wires, and telecommunications facilities, and shall be updated every 90 days.

(3) The Secretary shall use the information provided pursuant to this subsection in performing the duties set forth in subsection (b) of this section.

(4) The Secretary shall keep confidential the plans submitted to him or her under this subsection except that, pursuant to a nondisclosure agreement, the ~~secretary~~ Secretary may disclose the information to ~~the Vermont Center for Geographic Information created under 10 V.S.A. § 122 or to some other~~

~~person or~~ an entity for the purpose of aggregating the information.
Information so disclosed shall remain confidential.

(5) *The Secretary may request voluntary disclosure of information such as that set forth in subdivision (2) of this subsection regarding deployment of broadband, telecommunications facilities, or advanced metering infrastructure that is not publicly funded. The Secretary may enter into a nondisclosure agreement with respect to any such voluntary disclosures and the information disclosed pursuant thereto shall remain confidential. Alternatively, entities that voluntarily provide information requested pursuant to this subdivision may select a third party to be the recipient of such information. That third party may aggregate information provided by the entities, but shall not disclose the information it has received to any person, including the Secretary. The third party may only disclose the aggregated information to the Secretary.*

(6) *The Secretary may publicly disclose aggregated information based upon the information provided pursuant to this subsection.*

(7) *The confidentiality requirements of subdivisions (4) and (5) of this subsection shall not affect whether information provided to an agency of the state or a political subdivision of the state pursuant to other laws is or is not subject to disclosure.*

Sec. 11. 3 V.S.A. § 2222c is amended to read:

§ 2222c. BROADBAND AND WIRELESS DEPLOYMENT

** * **

(b) Report; broadband and wireless deployment; underserved and unserved areas. On or before ~~January 30, 2012~~ December 15, 2014, the Secretary of Administration or designee shall report to the General Assembly each of the following:

(1) As of ~~January 1, 2014~~ December 15, 2014, based upon data submitted by the providers, the areas of the State that will not be served by broadband. The report shall reflect both areas currently served as of the date of the report, as well as areas proposed to be served on or before ~~January 1, 2014~~ January 1, 2016, including broadband and wireless communications services funded in whole or in part pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Pub.L. No. 111-5. The report shall include a map and a narrative description of each of the following, as of ~~January 1, 2014~~ December 15, 2014:

(A) The areas served and the areas not served by broadband that has a download speed of at least 0.768 Mbps and an upload speed of at least 0.2 Mbps.

(B) The areas served and the areas not served by broadband that has a combined download and upload speed of at least five Mbps.

(C) The areas served and the areas not served by wireless communications service.

(2) Estimates as can reasonably be identified of the cost to:

(A) Provide broadband that has a download speed of at least 0.768 Mbps and an upload speed of at least 0.2 Mbps to areas not served by such broadband.

(B) Provide broadband that has a combined download and upload speed of at least five Mbps to areas not served by such broadband.

(C) Provide wireless communications service to the areas identified under subdivision (1)(C) of this subsection as not receiving such service.

Sec. 12. 3 V.S.A. § 2225 is added to read:

§ 2225. DIVISION FOR CONNECTIVITY

(a) Creation. The Division for Connectivity is created within the Agency of Administration as the successor in interest to and the continuation of the Vermont Telecommunications Authority. A Director for Connectivity shall be appointed by the Secretary of Administration. The Division shall receive administrative support from the Agency.

(b) Purposes. The purposes of the Division are to promote:

(1) access to affordable broadband service to all residences and businesses in all regions of the State, to be achieved in a manner that is consistent with the State Telecommunications Plan;

(2) universal availability of mobile telecommunication services, including voice and high-speed data along roadways, and near universal availability statewide;

(3) investment in telecommunications infrastructure in the State that creates or completes the network for service providers to create last-mile connection to the home or business and supports the best available and economically feasible service capabilities;

(4) the continuous upgrading of telecommunications and broadband infrastructure in all areas of the State is to reflect the rapid evolution in the capabilities of available mobile telecommunications and broadband technologies, and in the capabilities of mobile telecommunications and broadband services needed by persons, businesses, and institutions in the State; and

(5) the most efficient use of both public and private resources through State policies by encouraging the development of open access telecommunications infrastructure that can be shared by multiple service providers.

(c) Duties. To achieve its purposes, the Division shall:

(1) provide resources to local, regional, public, and private entities in the form of grants, technical assistance, coordination, and other incentives;

(2) prioritize the use of existing buildings and structures, historic or otherwise, as sites for visually-neutral placement of mobile telecommunications and wireless broadband antenna facilities;

(3) inventory and assess the potential to use federal radio frequency licenses held by instrumentalities of the State to enable broadband service in unserved areas of the State; take steps to promote the use of those licensed radio frequencies for that purpose; and recommend to the General Assembly any further legislative measures with respect to ownership, management, and use of these licenses as would promote the general good of the State;

(4) coordinate telecommunications initiatives among Executive Branch agencies, departments, and offices;

(5) from information reasonably available after public notice to and written requests made of mobile telecommunications and broadband service providers, develop and maintain an inventory of locations at which mobile telecommunications and broadband services are not available within the State, develop and maintain an inventory of infrastructure that is available or reasonably likely to be available to support the provision of services to unserved areas, and develop and maintain an inventory of infrastructure necessary for the provision of these services to the unserved areas;

(6) identify the types and locations of infrastructure and services needed to carry out the purposes stated in subsection (b) of this section;

(7) formulate an action plan that conforms with the State Telecommunications Plan and carries out the purposes stated in subsection (b) of this section;

(8) coordinate the agencies of the State to make public resources available to support the extension of mobile telecommunications and broadband infrastructure and services to all unserved areas;

(9) support and facilitate initiatives to extend the availability of mobile telecommunications and broadband services, and promote development of the infrastructure that enables the provision of these services;

(10) through the Department of Innovation and Information, aggregate and broker access at reduced prices to services and facilities required to provide wireless telecommunications and broadband services; and waive or reduce State fees for access to State-owned rights-of-way in exchange for comparable value to the State, unless payment for use is otherwise required by federal law; and

(11) receive all technical and administrative assistance as deemed necessary by the Director for Connectivity.

(d)(1) Deployment. The Director may request voluntary disclosure of information regarding deployment of broadband, telecommunications facilities, or advanced metering infrastructure that is not publicly funded. Such information may include data identifying projected coverage areas,

projected average speed of service, service type, and the anticipated date of completion in addition to identifying the location and routes of proposed cables, wires, and telecommunications facilities.

(2) The Director may enter into a nondisclosure agreement with respect to any voluntary disclosures under this subsection and the information disclosed pursuant thereto shall remain confidential. Alternatively, entities that voluntarily provide information requested under this subsection may select a third party to be the recipient of such information. The third party may aggregate information provided by the entities, but shall not disclose the information it has received to any person, including the Director. The third party shall only disclose the aggregated information to the Director. The Director may publicly disclose aggregated information based upon the information provided under this subsection. The confidentiality requirements of this subsection shall not affect whether information provided to any agency of the State or a political subdivision of the State pursuant to other laws is or is not subject to disclosure.

(e) Minimum technical service characteristics. The Division only shall promote the expansion of broadband services that offer actual speeds that meet or exceed the minimum technical service characteristic objectives contained in the State's Telecommunications Plan.

(f) Annual Report. Notwithstanding 2 V.S.A. § 20(d), on or before January 15 of each year, the Director shall submit a report of its activities for the preceding fiscal year to the General Assembly. Each report shall include an operating and financial statement covering the Division's operations during the year, including a summary of all grant awards and contracts and agreements entered into by the Division, as well as the action plan required under subdivision (c)(7) of this section. In addition, the report shall include an accurate map and narrative description of each of the following:

(1) the areas served and the areas not served by wireless communications service, as identified by the Department of Public Service, and cost estimates for providing such service to unserved areas;

(2) the areas served and the areas not served by broadband that has a download speed of at least 0.768 Mbps and an upload speed of at least 0.2 Mbps, as identified by the Department of Public Service, and cost estimates for providing such service to unserved areas;

(3) the areas served and the areas not served by broadband that has a combined download and upload speed of at least 5 Mbps, as identified by the Department of Public Service, and the costs for providing such service to unserved areas; and

(4) the areas served and the areas not served by broadband that has a download speed of at least 100 Mbps and is symmetrical, as identified by the

Department of Public Service, and the costs for providing such service to unserved areas.

Sec. 13. REPEAL

3 V.S.A. § 2222b (Secretary of Administration responsible for coordination and planning); 3 V.S.A. § 2222c (Secretary of Administration to prepare deployment report); 30 V.S.A. § 8077 (minimum technical service characteristics); and 30 V.S.A. § 8079 (broadband infrastructure investment) are repealed.

Sec. 14. CREATION OF POSITIONS; TRANSFER OF VACANT POSITIONS; REEMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

(a) The following exempt positions are created within the Division for Connectivity: one full-time Director and up to six additional full-time employees as deemed necessary by the Secretary of Administration.

(b) The positions created under subsection (a) of this section shall only be filled to the extent there are existing vacant positions in the Executive Branch available to be transferred and converted to the new positions in the Division for Connectivity, as determined by the Secretary of Administration and the Commissioner of Human Resources, so that the total number of authorized positions in the State shall not be increased by this act.

(c) All full-time personnel of the Vermont Telecommunications Authority employed by the Authority on the day immediately preceding the effective date

of this act, who do not obtain a position in the Division for Connectivity pursuant to subsection (a) of this section, shall be entitled to the same reemployment or recall rights available to non-management State employees under the existing collective bargaining agreement entered into between the State and the Vermont State Employees' Association.

Sec. 15. TRANSITIONAL PROVISIONS

(a) Personnel. The Secretary of Administration shall determine where the offices of the Division for Connectivity shall be housed.

(b) Assets and liabilities. The Secretary of Administration shall develop a plan for transferring the assets and liabilities of the Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA) to the Agency of Administration or to another entity, as deemed appropriate.

(c) Legal and contractual obligations. The Executive Director of the VTA, in consultation with the Secretary of Administration, shall identify all grants and contracts of the VTA and create a plan to redesignate the Agency of Administration as the responsible entity. The plan shall ensure that all existing grantors, grantees, and contractors are notified of the redesignation.

** * * Conduit Standards; Public Highways * * **

Sec. 16. 3 V.S.A. § 2226 is added to read:

§ 2226. PUBLIC HIGHWAYS; CONDUIT STANDARDS

(a) Intent. The intent of this section is to provide for the construction of infrastructure sufficient to allow telecommunications service providers seeking to deploy communication lines in the future to do so by pulling the lines through the conduit and appurtenances installed pursuant to this section. This section is intended to require those constructing public highways, including State, municipal, and private developers, to provide and install such conduit and appurtenances as may be necessary to accommodate future telecommunications needs within public highways and rights-of-way without further excavation or disturbance.

(b) Study. On or before December 15, 2014, the Secretary of Administration, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Service, the Secretary of Transportation, and the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, shall submit a report to the General Assembly on a "Dig Once Program" consistent with the intent of subsection (a) of this section. The study shall include findings and recommendations related to the installation of conduit and such vaults and other appurtenances as may be necessary to accommodate installation and connection of telecommunications lines within conduit during highway construction projects; construction standards with due consideration

given to existing and anticipated technologies and industry standards;
minimum diameter of the conduit and interducts to meet the requirements of
this section; the party responsible for installation costs; the ownership and
availability of the conduit; and any other matters the Secretary deems
appropriate.

* * * 248a Sunset * * *

Sec. 17. 30 V.S.A. § 248a is amended to read:

§ 248a. *CERTIFICATE OF PUBLIC GOOD FOR COMMUNICATIONS
FACILITIES*

* * *

(b) Definitions. ~~For the purposes of~~ As used in this section:

* * *

(4) “Telecommunications facility” means a communications facility that transmits and receives signals to and from a local, State, national, or international network used primarily for two-way communications for commercial, industrial, municipal, county, or State purposes and any associated support structure that is proposed for construction or installation which is primarily for communications purposes, and any ancillary improvements that are proposed for construction or installation and are primarily intended to serve the communications facilities or support structure. An applicant may seek approval of construction or installation of a

telecommunications facility whether or not the telecommunications facility is attached to an existing structure.

(5) "Wireless service" means any commercial mobile radio service, wireless service, common carrier wireless exchange service, cellular service, personal communications service (PCS), specialized mobile radio service, paging service, wireless data service, or public or private radio dispatch service.

** * **

(c) Findings. Before the Public Service Board issues a certificate of public good under this section, it shall find that:

(1) The proposed facility will not have an undue adverse effect on aesthetics, historic sites, air and water purity, the natural environment, and the public health and safety, and the public's use and enjoyment of the I-89 and I-91 scenic corridors or of any highway that has been designated as a scenic road pursuant to 19 V.S.A. § 2501 or a scenic byway pursuant to 23 U.S.C. § 162, with due consideration having been given to the relevant criteria specified in 10 V.S.A. §§ 1424a(d) and 6086(a)(1) through (8) and (9)(K). However, with respect to telecommunications facilities of limited size and scope, the Board shall waive all criteria of this subdivision other than 10 V.S.A. § 6086(a)(1)(D)(floodways) and (a)(8)(aesthetics, scenic beauty,

historic sites, rare and irreplaceable natural areas; endangered species; necessary wildlife habitat). Such waiver shall be on condition that:

(A) ~~The~~ the Board may determine, pursuant to the procedures described in subdivision (j)(2)(A) of this section, that a petition raises a significant issue with respect to any criterion of this subdivision; and

(B) ~~A~~ a telecommunications facility of limited size and scope shall comply, at a minimum, with the requirements of the Low Risk Site Handbook for Erosion Prevention and Sediment Control issued by the Department of Environmental Conservation, regardless of any provisions in that handbook that limit its applicability.

(2) Unless there is good cause to find otherwise, substantial deference has been given to the land conservation measures in the plans of the affected municipalities and the recommendations of the municipal legislative bodies and the municipal and regional planning commissions regarding the municipal and regional plans, respectively. Nothing in this section or other provision of law shall prevent a municipal body from basing its recommendations on an ordinance adopted under 24 V.S.A. § 2291(19) or bylaw adopted under 24 V.S.A. chapter 117 by the municipality in which the facility is located. A rebuttable presumption respecting compliance with the applicable plan shall be created by a letter from an affected municipal legislative body or municipal planning commission concerning compliance with the municipal plan and by a

letter from a regional planning commission concerning compliance with the regional plan.

(3) If the proposed facility relates to the provision of wireless service, the proposed facility reasonably cannot be collocated on or at an existing telecommunications facility, or such collocation would cause an undue adverse effect on aesthetics.

** * **

(e) Notice. No less than 45 days prior to filing an application for a certificate of public good under this section, the applicant shall serve written notice of an application to be filed with the Board pursuant to this section to the legislative bodies and municipal and regional planning commissions in the communities in which the applicant proposes to construct or install facilities; the Secretary of Natural Resources; the Secretary of Transportation; the Division for Historic Preservation; the Commissioner of Public Service and its Director for Public Advocacy; the Natural Resources Board if the application concerns a telecommunications facility for which a permit previously has been issued under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151; and the landowners of record of property adjoining the project sites. In addition, at least one copy of each application shall be filed with each of these municipal and regional planning commissions.

(1) Upon motion or otherwise, the Public Service Board shall direct that further public or personal notice be provided if the Board finds that such

further notice will not unduly delay consideration of the merits and that additional notice is necessary for fair consideration of the application.

(2) On the request of the municipal legislative body or the planning commission, the applicant shall attend a public meeting with the municipal legislative body or planning commission, or both, within the 45-day notice period before filing an application for a certificate of public good. The Department of Public Service shall attend the public meeting on the request of the municipality. The Department shall consider the comments made and information obtained at the meeting in making recommendations to the Board on the application and in determining whether to retain additional personnel under subsection (o) of this section.

* * *

(i) Sunset of Board authority. Effective on July 1, 2014 2017, no new applications for certificates of public good under this section may be considered by the Board.

* * *

(m) Municipal bodies; participation. The legislative body and the planning commission for the municipality in which a telecommunications facility is located shall have the right to appear and participate on any application under this section seeking a certificate of public good for the facility.

(n) Municipal recommendations. The Board shall consider the comments and recommendations submitted by the municipal legislative body and planning commission. The Board's decision to issue or deny a certificate of public good shall include a detailed written response to each recommendation of the municipal legislative body and planning commission.

(o) Retention; experts. The Department of Public Service may retain experts and other personnel as identified in section 20 of this title to provide information essential to a full consideration of an application for a certificate of public good under this section. The Department may allocate the expenses incurred in retaining these personnel to the applicant in accordance with section 21 of this title. The Department may commence retention of these personnel once the applicant has filed the 45-day notice under subsection (e) of this section. A municipal legislative body or planning commission may request that the Department retain these personnel. Granting such a request shall not oblige the Department or the personnel it retains to agree with the position of the municipality.

(p) Review process; guide. The Department of Public Service, in consultation with the Board, shall create, maintain, and make available to the public a guide to the process of reviewing telecommunications facilities under this section for use by local governments and regional planning commissions and members of the public who seek to participate in the process. On or

before September 1, 2014, the Department shall complete the creation of this guide and make it publically available.

Sec. 18. PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD; ORDER REVISION

The Public Service Board (the Board) shall define the terms “good cause” and “substantial deference” for the purpose of 30 V.S.A. § 248a(c)(2) in accordance with the following process:

(1) Within 30 days of the effective date of this section, the Board shall provide direct notice to each municipal legislative body and planning commission, the Vermont League of Cities and Towns, the Department of Public Service, and such other persons as the Board considers appropriate, that it will be amending its procedures order issued under 30 V.S.A. § 248a(1) to include definitions of these terms. The notice shall provide an opportunity for submission of comments and recommendations and include the date and time of the workshop to be held.

(2) Within 60 days of giving notice under subdivision (1) of this section, the Board shall amend its procedures order to include definitions of these terms.

*Sec. 19. REPORT; TELECOMMUNICATIONS FACILITY REVIEW
PROCESS*

On or before October 1, 2015, the Department of Public Service shall submit to the House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development and

the Senate Committee on Finance a report assessing the telecommunications facility review process under 30 V.S.A. § 248a. The report shall include the number of applications for the construction or installation of telecommunications facilities filed with the Board, the number of applications for which a certificate of public good was granted, the number of applications for which notice was filed but were then withdrawn, and the number of times the Department used its authority under 30 V.S.A. § 248(o) to allocate expenses incurred in retaining expert personnel to the applicant, during the year ending August 31, 2015.

Sec. 20. 10 V.S.A. § 1264(j) is amended to read:

(j) Notwithstanding any other provision of law, if an application to discharge stormwater runoff pertains to a telecommunications facility as defined in 30 V.S.A. § 248a and is filed before July 1, ~~2014~~ 2017 and the discharge will be to a water that is not principally impaired by stormwater runoff:

(1) The Secretary shall issue a decision on the application within 40 days of the date the Secretary determines the application to be complete, if the application seeks authorization under a general permit.

(2) The Secretary shall issue a decision on the application within 60 days of the date the Secretary determines the application to be complete, if the application seeks or requires authorization under an individual permit.

Sec. 21. 10 V.S.A. § 8506 is amended to read:

*§ 8506. RENEWABLE ENERGY PLANT; TELECOMMUNICATIONS
FACILITY; APPEALS*

(a) Within 30 days of the date of the act or decision, any person aggrieved by an act or decision of the ~~secretary~~ Secretary, under the provisions of law listed in section 8503 of this title, or any party by right may appeal to the ~~public service board~~ Public Service Board if the act or decision concerns a renewable energy plant for which a certificate of public good is required under 30 V.S.A. § 248 or a telecommunications facility for which the applicant has applied or has served notice under 30 V.S.A. § 248a(e) that it will apply for approval under 30 V.S.A. § 248a. This section shall not apply to a facility that is subject to section 1004 (dams before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) or 1006 (certification of hydroelectric projects) or chapter 43 (dams) of this title. This section shall not apply to an appeal of an act or decision of the secretary regarding a telecommunications facility made on or after July 1, ~~2014~~ 2017.

* * *

Sec. 22. REPEAL

2011 Acts and Resolves No. 53, Sec. 14d (repeal of limitations on municipal bylaws; municipal ordinances; wireless telecommunications facilities) is repealed.

Sec. 23. 3 V.S.A. § 2809 is amended to read:

§ 2809. REIMBURSEMENT OF AGENCY COSTS

(a)(1) The Secretary may require an applicant for a permit, license, certification, or order issued under a program that the Secretary enforces under 10 V.S.A. § 8003(a) to pay for the cost of research, scientific, programmatic, or engineering expertise provided by the Agency of Natural Resources, provided that the following apply:

(A) ~~the~~ The Secretary does not have such expertise or services and such expertise is required for the processing of the application for the permit, license, certification, or order; ~~or~~.

(B) ~~the~~ The Secretary does have such expertise but has made a determination that it is beyond the ~~agency's~~ Agency's internal capacity to effectively utilize that expertise to process the application for the permit, license, certification, or order. In addition, the Secretary shall determine that such expertise is required for the processing of the application for the permit, license, certification, or order.

(2) The Secretary may require an applicant under 10 V.S.A. chapter 151 to pay for the time of Agency of Natural Resources personnel providing research, scientific, or engineering services or for the cost of expert witnesses when ~~agency~~ Agency personnel or expert witnesses are required for the processing of the permit application.

(3) In addition to the authority set forth under 10 V.S.A. chapters 59 and 159 and § section 1283, the Secretary may require a person who caused the ~~agency~~ Agency to incur expenditures or a person in violation of a permit, license, certification, or order issued by the Secretary to pay for the time of ~~agency~~ Agency personnel or the cost of other research, scientific, or engineering services incurred by the ~~agency~~ Agency in response to a threat to public health or the environment presented by an emergency or exigent circumstance.

* * *

(g) Concerning an application for a permit to discharge stormwater runoff from a telecommunications facility as defined in 30 V.S.A. § 248a that is filed before July 1, ~~2014~~ 2017:

(1) Under subdivision (a)(1) of this section, the ~~agency~~ Agency shall not require an applicant to pay more than \$10,000.00 with respect to a facility.

(2) The provisions of subsection (c) (mandatory meeting) of this section shall not apply.

** * * Administration Reports; Transfers and Consolidations * * **

*Sec. 24. ADMINISTRATION REPORT; TRANSFERS AND
CONSOLIDATION; VERMONT USF FISCAL AGENT*

(a) On or before December 15, 2014, after receiving input from State and local agencies potentially impacted, the Secretary of Administration shall

submit a report to the General Assembly proposing a plan for transferring the responsibilities and powers of the Enhanced 911 Board, including necessary positions, to the Division for Connectivity, the Department of Public Service, or the Department of Public Safety, as he or she deems appropriate. The plan shall include budgetary recommendations and shall strive to achieve annual operational savings of at least \$300,000.00, as well as enhanced coordination and efficiency, and reductions in operational redundancies. The report shall include draft legislation implementing the Secretary's plan. In addition, the report shall include findings and recommendations on whether it would be cost effective to select an existing State agency to serve as fiscal agent to the Vermont Universal Service Fund.

(b) As part of the report required in subsection (a) of this section, the Secretary shall also make findings and recommendations regarding the status of the Vermont Communications Board, Department of Public Safety, and the Vermont Public Safety Broadband Network Commission (Vermont FirstNet). If not prohibited by federal law, the Secretary shall propose draft legislation creating an advisory board within the Division for Connectivity or the Department of Public Safety comprising 15 members appointed by the Governor to assume functions of the current Enhanced 911 Board, the Vermont Communications Board, and Vermont FirstNet, as the Secretary deems appropriate.

Sec. 25. ADMINISTRATION REPORT; VERMONT
TELECOMMUNICATIONS AUTHORITY; DIVISION FOR
CONNECTIVITY

On or before December 15, 2014, the Secretary of Administration, in consultation with the Commissioner of Public Service and the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development, shall submit a report to the General Assembly assessing all aspects of the Division for Connectivity established under this act, including its duties, functions, objectives, and agency location within the Executive Branch. The Secretary shall recommend any amendments he or she deems appropriate, including repeal of the Division for Connectivity if he or she determines the Vermont Telecommunications Authority (VTA) or another entity is more appropriate for implementing the State's telecommunications policies and deployment programs. If the Secretary recommends establishment of the Division for Connectivity or an entity other than the VTA, he or she shall make a proposal regarding establishment of a new telecommunications advisory board, which could be modeled after the VTA Board of Directors and may include a proposal for transferring the existing VTA Board members to such board.

Sec. 26. ADMINISTRATION PRESENTATION TO GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In January of 2015, the Secretary shall present the reports required in Secs. 24 and 25 of this act to the Senate Committees on Finance and on Government

Operations and to the House Committees on Commerce and Economic Development and on Government Operations.

* * * *DPS Deployment Report* * * *

Sec. 27. DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SERVICE; DEPLOYMENT REPORT

On July 15, 2015, the Commissioner of Public Service shall submit to the General Assembly and the Division for Connectivity a report, including maps, indicating the service type and average speed of service of mobile telecommunications and broadband services available within the State by census block as of December 31, 2014.

* * * *VTA; Dormant Status* * * *

Sec. 28. 30 V.S.A. § 8060a is added to read:

§ 8060a. PERIOD OF DORMANCY

On July 1, 2015, the Division for Connectivity established under 3 V.S.A. § 2225 shall become the successor in interest to and the continuation of the Vermont Telecommunications Authority, and the Authority shall cease all operations and shall not resume its duties as specified under this chapter or under any other Vermont law unless directed to do so by enactment of the General Assembly or, if the General Assembly is not in session, by order of the Joint Fiscal Committee. Notwithstanding 32 V.S.A. § 5, the Joint Fiscal Committee shall issue such order only upon finding that, due to an unforeseen change in circumstances, implementation of the Authority's capacity to issue

revenue bonds or to accept any new gifts, grants, or contributions would be the most effective means of furthering the State's telecommunications goals and policies. Upon the effective date of such enactment or order, the duties of the Executive Director and the Board of Directors of the Authority shall resume in accordance with 30 V.S.A. chapter 91 and the Director for Connectivity shall be the acting Executive Director of the Authority, until the position is filled pursuant to 30 V.S.A. § 8061(e).

* * * *Retransmission Fees* * * *

Sec. 29. 30 V.S.A. § 518 is added to read:

§ 518. RETRANSMISSION FEES; REPORTING

(a) Purpose. The purpose of this section is to provide the Attorney General with information necessary to investigate certain conduct within the cable and broadcast network industries to determine whether unfair methods of competition or unfair or deceptive acts or practices are occurring in violation of 9 V.S.A. chapter 63.

(b) Reporting. Annually, beginning January 1, 2015, each commercial broadcasting station doing business with a Vermont cable company shall report to the Attorney General any fees charged for program content retransmitted on the cable network under a retransmission consent agreement entered into pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 325, for the prior calendar year.

(c) Investigations. The Attorney General may investigate retransmission fees charged by commercial broadcasting stations, pursuant to his or her investigatory powers established under 9 V.S.A. chapter 63.

(d) Public disclosure. The information received under this section by the Attorney General shall be disclosed to the public at a time and in a manner determined by the Attorney General to be consistent with and permitted by the Public Records Act and relevant provisions of federal law.

(e) Enforcement. A violation of this section constitutes an unfair and deceptive act and practice in commerce under 9 V.S.A. § 2453.

(f) The Attorney General may adopt rules he or she deems necessary to implement this section. The rules, as well as any finding of unfair or deceptive practices with regard to retransmission consent fees, shall not be inconsistent with the rules, regulations, and decisions of the Federal Communications Commission and the federal courts interpreting the Communications Act of 1934, as amended.

* * * Statutory Revision Authority * * *

Sec. 30. LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STATUTORY REVISION
AUTHORITY; LEGISLATIVE INTENT

(a) The staff of the Office of the Legislative Council in its statutory revision capacity is authorized and directed to amend the Vermont Statutes Annotated as follows:

(1) deleting all references to “by the end of the year 2013” in 30 V.S.A. chapter 91; and

(2) during the interim of the 2015 biennium of the General Assembly, in 30 V.S.A. § 227e, replacing every instance of the words “Secretary of Administration” and “Secretary” with the words “Director for Connectivity” and “Director,” respectively.

(b) Any duties and responsibilities that arise by reference to the Division for Connectivity in the Vermont Statutes Annotated shall not be operative until the Division is established pursuant to 3 V.S.A. § 2225.

** * * Effective Dates * * **

Sec. 31. EFFECTIVE DATES

This act shall take effect on passage, except that Secs. 12, 13, and 14 (regarding the Division for Connectivity) shall take effect on July 1, 2015.